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Students' positive responses toward homework given by English teachers at vocational high school

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Abstract

This study aims to find out and describe the students' positive responses toward homework given by English teachers at grade twelve in SMK Negeri 3 Purworejo in the academic year of 2014/2015. The subject of the research is students of SMK Negeri 3 Purworejo grade twelve in the academic year of 2014/2015. The approach is qualitative naturalistic and the data were taken using open questionnaire. The research finding reveals 21 final categories. From those 21 final categories, there are four main components which are important to be explored further. Those four components are students, homework materials, teachers, and facilities. The positive responses toward homework coming from the students are satisfaction and happiness if they can do it without cheating. They are challenged in doing the homework and get new knowledge. Doing the listening homework trains students to concentrate. They better understand the learning material, develop their self-confidence, and express their ideas and opinions. For homework materials, the students' positive responses are dominated by the material that students have already learned and have not learned yet. The positive responses based on teachers are the English teachers have to discuss and give scores of the homework. Regarding facilities, the students consider that the school's facilities should be various and complete to help them do the homework.

Keywords: homework; positive responses; English teachers; vocational high school

Introduction

The presence of teachers in the learning process is expected to enhance the students' competence in the field of knowledge (cognitive), skills (psychomotor), and attitudes (affective) which become teacher's professional duties. One possibility to improve the students' competence is to provide homework. Teachers give homework based on the subject matter, the availability of time, the students' absorption, place, and facilities and infrastructure (systemic components) in the hope of increasing students' competence.

Kinds or varieties of homework given to the students by the teachers will probably cause a reaction or response. The responses can be positive or negative. Responses that emerge from the students have an individual subjectivity diversely and naturally. Variety of students' responses that emerge especially positive response is what lies behind this study.

This study explores a variety of students' of grade twelve positive responses toward homework given by the English teachers. Grade twelve is chosen because grade twelve students receive homework from several different teachers. The experiences of receiving homework from different teachers will bring a wide variety of responses. Positive responses are chosen due to consideration of writing time. This research was held in SMK Negeri 3 Purworejo because the researcher is one of the English teachers at the school. Researcher has a professional responsibility to develop and promote teaching and learning activities, especially English at the school.

The result of this study is a wide range of students' responses toward homework given by the English teachers. The responses are very likely to be utilized by various stakeholders to observe the performance, change the way of thinking, optimize the business, understand the students' needs, and/or understand the willingness of the stakeholders themselves.

Problem Formulation

1. What are the varieties of positive responses given by students at grade twelve in SMK Negeri 3 Purworejo toward English homework they have received during the first semester until the semester when the research was conducted?
2. What are the substantive theories that can be formulated from the reality of positive responses given by the students at grade twelve in SMK Negeri 3 Purworejo toward English homework as intended by point 1 above?

Literature Review

Different characters in each student will create diversity in responding toward homework. This character's differences are related to the competency of the students. According to Bruce Jackson (2007, pp.55-59), "Good boys and girls obediently do their homework; rebellious boys and girls do not". This excerpt illustrates that the competence of students in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes can affect students' responses to homework.

Students' responses to the material homework can be related to the number and level of difficulty of homework. The amount of homework assigned to students will make students depressed (Lacina-Gifford & Gifford, 2004). Besides the amount and level of difficulty of homework should not be the focus of attention of the teacher because the most important is the quality of homework. Harris Cooper, a researcher from Duke University writes that "The quality of homework assignments is more important than the quantity of time students spend on them ... Homework should not be graded; mandatory assignments that are not handed in should result in remediation, not a falling grade", as quoted by Mangione (2008, pp. 614-615).

Teachers, as the subject homework giver, affect students' progress. Competency of teachers will have an impact on teaching and their treatment of homework given to students. Homework which is not examined and not returned to the students makes the students disappointed and lazy to do homework, as Darling-Hammond & Olivia (2006) reported, "... Students feel that homework was not meaningful is that they did not receive immediate or any feedback from the teacher regarding the homework assignment completed". Instructions that are not clear when the teachers give homework are also a concern of students in assessing what the teachers' intentions. Darling-Hammond & Olivia (2006) write "Some students not knowing to begin how to begin the homework assignment, and some cases they do not understand the instructions for their assignment as given by the teacher".

The methods which are used by the teachers can also affect students in homework. Students expect that teachers provide various methods so that they do not get bored. Jan Wilson and Rhodes (2010) reveal that 73% of students do not like homework and 84% of them stated that the students were bored with the type of homework that had the same method. The students expected to have more varied assignments. It is also conveyed by Pasi (2006) that students get bored about homework assignments because they repetitious.

Time to complete homework becomes one of the reasons students give feedback. Students feel overwhelmed when they have to manage their time between teaching and learning activities in the classroom, extracurricular activities, doing side jobs, and helping keep siblings at home (Darling-Hammond & Olivia, 2006). According to Lacina-Gifford and Gifford (2004), homework which was given only a day keeps the students stressed because students need time to rest after school. Parents also advise the school to reduce the amount of homework to be done by students in the regulation. Jan Wilson and John Rhodes advise teachers to consider the duration in doing homework and the number of homework for the students.

The location or place to do homework makes students comfortable to work and complete homework. Students want to do homework at school with teacher guidance, as it is written in Jan Wilson and John Rhodes, "Allow students to start on homework assignment in class and monitor their ability to proceed".

Method

This research approach is qualitative naturalistic in the sense of data to be searched and extracted directly from the actual subjects of research with the setting of learning English in SMK Negeri 3 Purworejo. Based on Denzin and Lincoln (2004, p.2), "Qualitative research is multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter". This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' live". The form is qualitative and it is written in the form of phrases, sentences or paragraph.

The required data was information from the students related to their positive responses toward English homework which they have received since the first semester until the semester when the research was conducted. The subject of this study is students of SMK Negeri 3 Purworejo grade twelve of the academic year of 2014/2015.

The data was collected by giving students open questionnaires. It allowed the students to answer freely without presenting choices. The data were analyzed by the following steps: (1) The first step was to continue sorting the data obtained with the technique category (continuous comparison) which produced groups of categories with specific characteristics; (2) The second step was to describe each category in a comprehensive manner; (3) The third step was attracting a number of substantive theories that might arise from that category; (4) The appearance of the research would be: (5) Chart categorization of students' positive responses toward English homework that have been received by the students; (6) Description of each categorization of students' positive responses; (7) Formulations of substantive theory which was obtained in learning settings associated with students' responses toward English homework that have been received by the students.

Findings and Discussion

The numbers of data consist of 112 items. All data were obtained from students of SMK Negeri 3 Purworejo at grade twelve. The data covered their positive responses toward homework given by their English teachers. The researcher classified the students' responses into seven categories; those are students, homework materials, teachers' characteristics, teaching and learning process, time allocation, place, and school facilities.

The first category, students, as sources of responses toward homework, is divided into two classifications. They are called students' positive responses toward homework based on the internal and external competences. For the students' positive responses toward homework based on the internal competences, the researcher classified it into cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

The second category was related to the material aspects of homework. The researcher broke down the material aspects of homework into two categories; those are the students' positive responses toward language skills materials and language knowledge materials. In the language skills category there are five categories; those are reading skills, listening skills, speaking skills, writing skills, and grammar pattern. In the language knowledge materials category there are four classifications; those are understanding the material, the number of homework, the level of difficulty, and the national final exam preparation.

The third category is the teaching and learning process, the researcher divided it into two categories. They are the methods and approaches used by the teacher in the teaching learning process in the classroom. There are two categories in the teachers' approaches; those are

approaches that use information technology (IT) and approaches that do not use information technology (Non IT).

The fourth category is school facilities. There are two categories in this group, those are online and offline facilities. Other categories in relation to students' positive responses toward homework given by the teacher are those related to teacher characteristics, time allocation, and place. From the categorization above there are 21 final categories. The researcher again grouped the final categories based on simpler topics so that they are easy to understand. These topics and categories are further explained in the Table 1.

Table 1. Final Categories of Data

No.	Topics
1.	Internal Students' Competence based Responses Affective based Responses Cognitive based Responses Psychomotor based Responses
2.	External Students' Competence based Responses
3.	Teachers' Characteristics based Responses
4.	Language Skill Homework Materials based Responses Reading based Responses Listening based Responses Speaking based Responses Writing based Responses Grammatical Pattern based Responses
5.	Language Knowledge Homework Materials based Responses Understanding Homework Materials based Responses Amount of Homework based Responses Difficulty Level based Responses National Final Exam based Responses
6.	Responses based on Time Allocation
7.	Responses based on Facilities Online based Responses Offline based Responses
8.	Responses based on Place
9.	Teaching Methods based Responses
10.	Teaching Approaches based Responses IT based Responses Non IT based Responses

By doing the homework, students feel more enthusiastic in learning. Students sense the happiness if they can do the homework themselves. The students are satisfied if they can do the homework without cheating and feel confident. The students have positive responses towards the homework distribution as their responsibility which have to be done appropriately and submit it on time. Homework makes students diligent in learning. Students reveal that homework which is scored is able to force them to be industrious to complete it.

The distribution of homework helps students understand the material that has been taught by the teacher. Students also relearn the material so that they will better understand the material being studied. By doing the homework, students feel that they use their capabilities to think how to complete their homework and accordingly their understanding of English materials improves. If the students understand the material, therefore, they can do themselves the homework. The students feel knowledgeable. By repeating or relearning the material, the students are able to memorize the lesson which had been previously learned from school; so that they cannot easily forget it. By doing homework in the form of listening repeatedly, students can identify the different sounds in the different words that have almost the same

pronunciation. Students also have the experiences of saying words that are rarely pronounced through the speaking tasks.

The students need someone else to help them complete the homework. The students need their friends' guidance whose are smarter than them, mentors, or in group work. Guidance is needed so students can understand the material and complete the homework given by their teachers. By group work, students feel more confident in completing their homework. In addition, students feel that they can express their opinions and share experiences. Even though the students work in groups, they do not copy their friends' work or cheat in completing the homework.

The students like teachers who have good attitudes and personalities. Those teachers can trigger students to accomplish the homework. Students like teachers who can deliver material clearly and the explanation is easy to understand. These understandable explanations make students are eager to accomplish the homework. The students stated that they could find out their mistakes in doing the homework if the teacher thoroughly discussed the homework given. Students feel satisfied if the teacher examines the homework that has been completed.

The students feel that by doing homework in the form of reading makes their understanding of vocabulary increase. By reading, students recognize the correct writing of words and understand the meaning of a sentence. Reading lots of stories from abroad increases their knowledge. Students get new information from reading a text. Another thing that students like from reading homework is the answers to the reading comprehension questions are already available in the text. Besides, the pictures that illustrate the text make students entertained and not get bored.

By doing listening homework, students get familiar into conversations conducted by native speakers and check their understanding of the sentences they hear. The students state that they can differentiate the spelling of words that have similar sounds and how to pronounce words correctly. According to students' testimonies, listening trains them to concentrate. The listening homework materials make students feel curious, challenged, not bored and get new atmosphere especially if the homework material is listening to western songs. Unfortunately listening homework material is rarely given.

The students use the words, present English conversations in front of the class, sing English songs, spell words correctly, pronounce words, are fluent in English, and dare to speak, indicating that English speaking become the students' self-actualization. Students feel cool and challenged when speaking English. The students state that by practicing speaking, memorizing words becomes easier.

By doing writing homework, the students can use their vocabulary. Writing makes students feel an increase in their knowledge and know how to write using correct English grammar. They can share experiences, improve writing skills, and of course increase their creativity. The students enjoy doing writing activities.

By knowing grammar well students can recognize sentences that do not use correct sentence patterns. Furthermore, students state that understanding tenses makes them understand not only the content of English text, but everything that uses English. Getting better on understanding grammar patterns makes students ready or confident to speak English.

The students state that they have to understand the lesson first before doing the homework. With the use of the words having been learned, taught, and explained, the students' mastery of the material has been achieved. Having mastered the materials, it is clear that the students want the teacher to distribute the homework. By doing homework, students feel that they can relearn the material and get better in understanding the material. On the other hand, the students want the homework material is from the material that has not been taught before. The students feel curious, challenged, and better prepared to receive the next lessons.

The students like to be given a small number of homework. They state that it is better to get a small amount of simple homework which makes them understand rather than a lot of homework which is beyond their understanding. On the contrary, the students admit that the number of homework assignments can be as many as possible but they must be discussed at school.

The students want the homework they receive to be relatively easy. If possible, the level of difficulty of the homework is neither too difficult nor too easy. Unfortunately, such ideal homework is rare. The students want the teacher to explain the lesson first so the students have no difficulties in doing their assigned homework.

Another thing that the students want is the teachers give them homework which resembles the content of National Final Exam. National Final Exam is the examination that will be encountered by the grade twelve students in the last semester of their study.

Short time homework is the students' choice, because they want to do homework immediately after arriving at home. On the other hand, long term homework or at least three-day-period before submission date is the students' wish because this will allow them do the homework carefully or will grant them sufficient time to relax and not get stressed.

One of the facilities that students need to complete and submit their homework is internet connection. The students use internet network to seek answers to their homework. Paperless, knowing values immediately, and exciting are the three reasons underlying why students like to submit homework through internet.

Textbooks are learning resources for students to do the homework. School library should provide various sources of books so students can borrow certain books. School library that has a complete collection of books will help students as they do not need to buy books as well as student worksheets. The use of student worksheets is only one-time because the questions and the answers are in one book so it cannot be used again. Students state that they use teachers' notes as a source of learning in doing the homework.

School is the students' place of choice for completing the homework because it is representative. There are internet connection, books, and electricity. On the other hand, the students say that they also prefer home because house is a comfortable place to do the homework. At home, the students get full concentration, are able to think freely, and can ask neighbors to help them.

The students note two methods of working on homework assigned by the teacher that they like best. The first is doing homework in groups. This cooperation makes the students share knowledge. They can easily understand and absorb the learning materials. The second is homework should be done individually. Every student gets different questions so that every student increases their own competencies.

The students enjoy utilizing internet for doing homework. Searching answers in internet is faster than finding answers in the book. The students will browse the internet if the homework material does not exist in the book or has not been taught before. They also state that searching via internet can get wide knowledge and lots of information. Meanwhile, they can also perform a paperless task if the result of homework is submitted through email. On the other hand, the students also need printed learning sources. They say that textbooks are well organized and have a lot of examples. The students like to use students' worksheet to do homework because both questions and answer sheet are available in one book.

Conclusion

The analysis toward 112 data items collected in the research about students' positive responses produced three fundamental points. First, there are 21 kinds of final categories of positive responses given by students toward homework at this setting. Second, it serves as a comprehensive description on each category that appears. Third, it is obtained 12 substantive

theories on the connection of the cause-effect which deals with the students' positive responses toward homework at the setting of the research target.

From 21 kinds of final categories, there are four components which are important to be explained further. Those four components are the students, homework materials, teachers' characteristics, and facilities. The responses based on students' competence domain contain the positive responses toward homework such as feeling satisfied and happy if they could do their homework without cheating. The students are challenged in doing it and get new knowledge. Listening homework trains to concentrate, get better to understand the learning material, develop their self-confidence, and express their ideas and opinions. The students' positive responses toward homework materials are dominated by the materials that students have learned and have not learned yet. Furthermore, the positive responses based on teachers are the English teachers have to discuss and give scores to the submitted homework. The last responses are about facilities. The twelve graders in this setting consider that the school's facilities should be various and complete to help them to do the homework.

From the contents of 12 substantive theories, it can be grouped into four grand substantive theories. The first grand substantive theory is the students feel satisfied and happy if they could do the homework without cheating, relearn the learning material, get new knowledge, train to concentrate and get better understand learning material, develop their self-confidence, and express their ideas and opinions. The second is the teachers have to discuss and give scores to the completed homework for appreciation toward students and their efforts. Receiving marks can be a way for students to prove their existence of capability in doing the homework. The third is the homework materials make the students practice and review the learning material and better prepared for future lessons. The last grand substantive theory is the students need various and complete facilities to do the homework.

From the data above, the researcher concluded that homework is important to be assigned in the English teaching learning process for high school students. Homework helps teachers to get feedbacks of their teaching process. Homework helps students to do self-study. Students can get learning resources from others rather than totally reliant to their teachers. The teachers are not the only source of learning. The presence of homework may trigger positive or negative responses. The data of this study shows positive responses toward homework. However, in-depth research is needed to find out the negative responses toward homework.

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